

## Chapter 3: Issues Identified by the Public

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One of the objectives of this plan is to identify the most significant issues related to trail use in Nevada. To determine trail issues facing Nevadans, the Nevada Division of State Parks conducted a statewide mail survey titled Trail Issues in Nevada. The issues presented in this chapter were developed using a survey instrument sent to the Recreational Trails Program mailing list. The Recreational Trails Program mailing list is comprised of 200 names and/or addresses of people and organizations. The Recreational Trails Program mailing list represents federal agencies, state agencies, local parks and recreation departments, environmental groups, non-profit entities, user groups and commercial outdoor recreation providers.

Of the 200 questionnaires mailed initially, 11, or 5.5%, were returned undeliverable to produce a net sample size of 189. One hundred thirteen (113) persons returned completed questionnaires for a response rate of 59.79%.

Nevada Division of State Parks staff compiled a list of 20 trail issues. Respondents were asked to rank the issues by providing a weighted score. Respondents were provided with five tokens, each representing \$10, and instructed to place the tokens next to the issues they felt were of most importance. More than one token could be placed next to an issue, but each respondent only had a total of 5 tokens, or \$50.

Although Nevada Division of State Parks staff developed and implemented the process to produce the issues, the 113 participants in the process determined the ranking of the issues. Therefore, the issues do not necessarily represent the views of the Nevada Division of State Park.

### **Issue #1: Loss of public access to trails**

As communities continue to grow, and new development is constructed next to public lands, access to recreational trails is restricted or lost. Access refers to the ability of the user to get to the trailhead or area where the recreational opportunity exists. In some areas of Nevada, traditional OHV use patterns are threatened by proposals for more restrictive public access to existing recreational areas. As land continues to be developed to accommodate Nevada's rapidly expanding population, access to trails can be impacted, and sometimes completely eliminated.

Trail users perceive that recreation opportunities and motorized access are being reduced in both urban and rural settings. Urbanization, reclassification of land use, and closures due to environmental concerns are changing the availability of quality recreation trails.

There is also the need for improved trail access for people with disabilities. Trail providers need to inform trail users of the conditions they will encounter on trails to allow each individual to decide if a particular trail is accessible to them.

### **Issue #2: Lack of funding for trails**

The need for funding to plan, develop and maintain trails and trailhead facilities will more than likely continue as Nevada's population grows and trail use and demand for new trails increase. Trails and other recreation uses are a low funding priority for many multiple-use land management agencies, and recreational trail providers must compete with other public needs for the limited funds.

Many land managers must rely on outside help, such as volunteers and grants to complete trail projects. There is the need for more funds for personnel, volunteer programs, trail maintenance and development, planning and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements, signs and support facilities.

### **Issue #3: Closure of trails and roads**

The concern is for the loss of opportunities due to closure of recreational trails and roads for reasons such as erosion, environmental concerns, wilderness or other special use designations. Traditionally used areas are often displaced by urbanization without providing alternative areas, which can lead to unmanaged and unauthorized use. Cooperation and compromise in land use decisions are required to balance different needs.

### **Issue #4: Not enough trails**

There is a demand for new trail opportunities in areas experiencing high growth rates. As the types of activities change and new ones emerge, trails that provide for a specific type of activity may be needed.

Recreational trails are not always seen as top priorities in relation to other community needs or even other recreational needs. Recreation providers must work together to make a stronger case that trails are important to communities and provide a broad range of social and economic benefits and are deserving of a higher position on the city, county, state and federal political agendas.

### **Issue #5: Not enough support facilities near trails**

In addition to actual trail resources, users require support facilities appropriate to the area's use and activities. All Terrain Vehicle (ATV) and motorcycle riders require loading ramps, and equestrians require space to navigate vehicles with trailers. Well designed support facilities can also assist the managers in protecting resources.

### **Issue #6: Erosion and deterioration of trails**

Erosion and deterioration of trails may be due to natural events, overuse, poor design, improper trail construction, and/or lack of regular maintenance. Increased use of backcountry trails and roads not originally designed for intensive use has caused erosion and deterioration. A general lack of financial resources has forced land managers to cut back agency funded trail crews and/or close trails. Trail users are concerned that the quality of their experience is being diminished through trail deterioration and erosion.

Deterioration of trails jeopardizes the safety and health of trail users, discourages continued visitation, and threatens the investments already made in trail resources. Delaying maintenance will result in increased long-term costs. Deterioration is less expensive to fix if diagnosed and dealt with early. Poor maintenance can foster lack of respect and encourage depreciative behavior such as pioneering new trails.

### **Issue #7: Not enough good information material about Nevada trails**

Trail users request information and detailed maps that provide up-to-date, accurate information regarding trail condition and routes. Much of the information available is out of date or too general. Motorized trail users request information and detailed maps for areas that are legal and open to Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) use. Currently there is not much information available.

### **Issue #8: Lack of trail etiquette/ethics**

Lack of trail etiquette and environmental ethics can lead to user conflicts, unpleasant trail experiences and impacts to the environment. Littering, excessive speed, not yielding to others, not staying on trails, vandalism and an inability of managers to enforce regulations leads to continued user conflicts and environmental impacts.

### **Issue #9: Inadequate trail maintenance**

Land managers are struggling to maintain existing trails due to increasing use levels and declining maintenance budgets. At the same time, they are being asked by user groups to develop more and more new trails. There seems to be enough funding available for trail development, but not enough for routine day-to-day trail maintenance.

### **Issue #10: Too much litter and trash along trails**

Littering and lack of routine custodial maintenance are visible problems and negatively impact many trail users. In many cases, managers lack the resources necessary to provide regular trail upkeep.

### **Issue #11: Lack of directional signs along trails and trailheads**

Trail signs let people know their location and alerts users to intersections and points of confusion. Mileage markers and directional signs allow users to define the time and route needed for their trip. There is also the need to keep signs replaced that are damaged or removed due to vandalism.

### **Issue #12: Lack of trails close to home**

Demand for trails and different types of use, especially within and adjacent to communities is increasing. As more lands are developed, planning for trails recreation on a local and regional level becomes more important. The public demands trail opportunities that link homes to public land and other recreation features.

This issue is clearly in line with the findings of the 2003 Trail Activities in Nevada Survey that identified walking for pleasure and exercise and jogging or running as the most popular trail activities of Nevadans. These activities are generally engaged near home, and on a regular basis.

### **Issue #13: Too many different types of users on trails**

Conflicts between trail users increase when unintended activities or inappropriate behaviors occur such as mountain bicycles using a pedestrian only trail or users not yielding to others. This leads to unpleasant trail experiences and can be a serious safety issue.